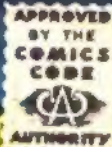


CONAN THE  
BARBARIAN

15¢  
©

6  
JUNE

THE GREATEST SWORD-AND-SORCERY HERO OF ALL!



# CONAN

## THE BARBARIAN

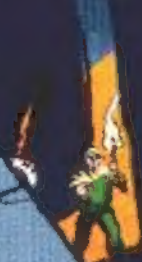


TM

MARVEL  
COMICS  
GROUP



DEVIL-WINGS  
OVER  
SHADIZAR!





# CONAN THE BARBARIAN!™

STAN LEE EDITOR • ROY THOMAS WRITER • BARRY SMITH ARTIST • SAL BUSCEMA INKER • MIKE STEVENS LETTERER •

## DEVIL-WINGS OVER SHADIZAR



INSPIRED BY  
AND CONTINUING  
THE ADVENTURES  
OF THE HERO  
CREATED BY  
**Robert E.  
Howard**

THEY CALL HER  
**SHADIZAR THE WICKED--**  
BUT A CITY, EVEN ONE IN  
THIEF-RICH ZAMORA, IS NO  
MORE GOOD NOR EVIL THAN  
THE **MEN** WHO WALK HER  
TORCH-BARE STREETS, HER  
SHADOWED ALLEYWAYS--

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--OR WHO CLAMBER  
SILENTLY OVER  
WALLS THAT HAVE  
WITNESSED A  
THOUSAND  
GRISLY ACTS--

NO WONDER THEY CALL YOU  
**BLACKRAT**. YOU'RE ALWAYS  
NOSING ABOUT WHERE  
YOU DON'T BELONG.

MAYBE SO--  
BUT I'M  
THE ONE  
**STABBED**  
HIM.

AFTER ALL, WASN'T  
I THE ONE  
**SUBDUED** THE  
OLD GOLDSMITH?

BESIDES,  
HOW CAN  
**TWO MEN**  
DIVIDE  
**THREE GOLD**  
OBJECTS?

THE SAME  
WAY ONE  
MAN CAN  
DIVIDE  
**ANOTHER**  
MAN!

NO NEED  
FOR TWO  
FRIENDS TO  
**QUARREL**.

LET ME  
SETTLE IT-- BY  
**TAKING** THAT  
THIRD PIECE!

MITRA!

I'M  
**WARNING**  
YOU, FAFNIR  
--I WANT MY  
PROPER  
**SHARE** OF  
THE BOOTY.

YOU  
**WRONG**  
ME, LITTLE  
ONE, AS  
ALWAYS.

HAVEN'T I  
OFFERED YOU  
THE GOLDEN  
**GOBLET**  
WE STOLE?

WHILE YOU  
KEEP BOTH  
THE CANDLE-  
STICK AND  
THE DAGGER,  
I SUPPOSE.

I DON'T KNOW  
WHO YOU ARE,  
BARBARIAN--

HURRY UP AND  
**RUN HIM THRU**.  
RODENT--  
BEFORE HE DIES  
OF OLD AGE!

BUT MY **BLADE**  
WILL TEACH YOU  
THE FOLLY OF  
LEAPING **SHORD-  
LESS** INTO A  
DISPUTE.

I'VE HALF A  
MIND TO  
LET THE YOUNG  
SWINE **LIVE**.  
JUST FOR  
SPITE.

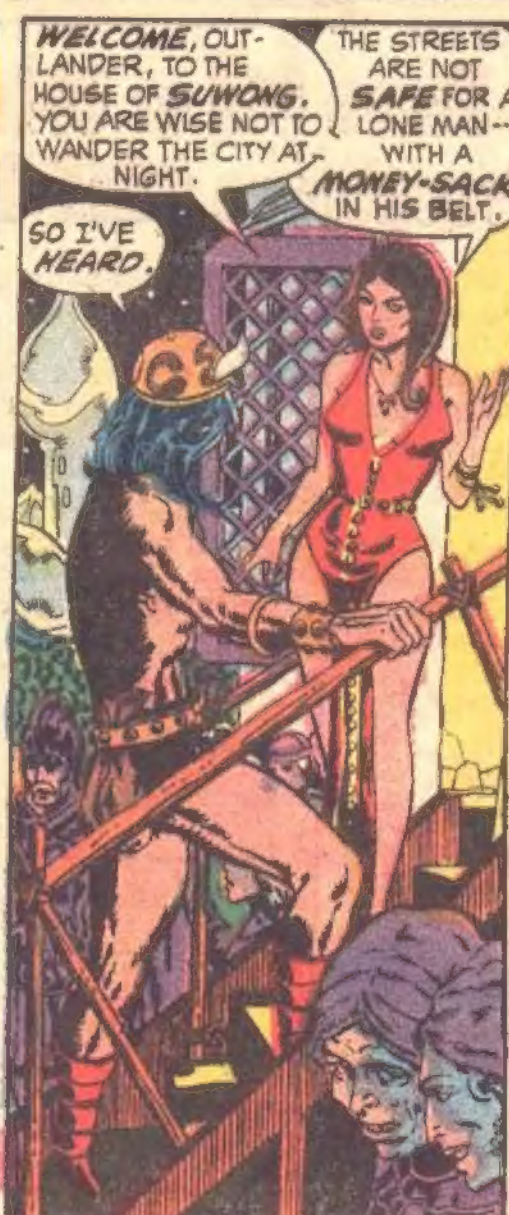
ALWAYS  
**BOSSING**  
ME, AREN'T  
YOU, FAFNIR?

BY MITRA, DO I  
HAVE TO **SHOVE**  
HIM ONTO YOUR--

AARRRAHH!

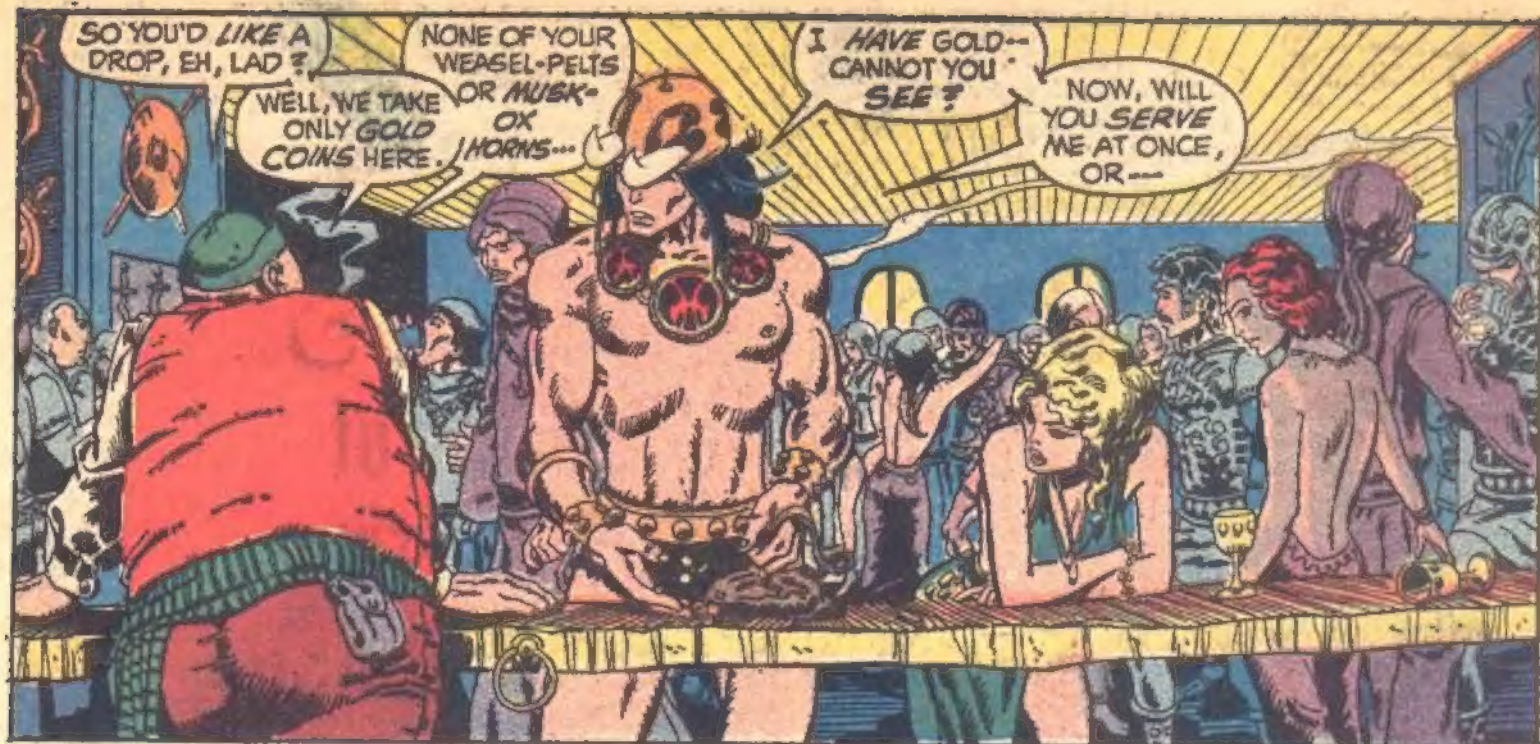
FAFNIR!  
HE--HE  
**DUCKED!!**





CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE





SO YOU'D LIKE A DROP, EH, LAD?

NONE OF YOUR WEASEL-PELTS OR MUSK-OR HORNS...

I HAVE GOLD-- CANNOT YOU SEE?

NOW, WILL YOU SERVE ME AT ONCE, OR--

WELL, WE TAKE ONLY GOLD COINS HERE.



A VEILED THREAT-- AND THE LUSTRE OF FRESH-MINTED COINS. WHAT ZAMORIAN BARTENDER COULD RESIST SUCH A BLEND? THUS, ERE LONG--

A THOUSAND PARDONS, SIR---BUT MAY I SPEAK WITH YOU FOR A MOMENT?

YOU'VE SPIED ON ME LIKE A HAWK SINCE I CAME IN.

SIT WITH ME--- AND SAVE YOUR EYES.



MY THANKS, WAYFARER. I WORK HERE-- AND I GET TIRED OF STANDING.

JENNA IS MY NAME. HAVE YOU ONE?

I AM COWAN-- A CIMMERIAN.



CIMMERIA? I THOUGHT THAT LAND WAS ONLY A LEGEND--

---LIKE AESSGAARD, AND VANAHEIM--- AND ATLANTIS, WHICH MEN SAY SANK BENEATH THE SEA,

I'VE HEARD OF AQUILONIA-- BUT NOT OF ITS KING.

DO YOU LIKE TO MAKE JOURNEYS?

I WAS IN AQUILONIA ONCE, THOUGH. I EVEN SAW KING NUMEDIDES HIMSELF, IN HIS ROYAL CHARIOT.



OH YES-- WHEN I GET THE CHANCE.

BUT THAT TAKES MONEY-- SO MOSTLY I STAY IN SHADIZAR.

MONEY'S NOT SO HARD TO COME BY. MONTHS AGO, I LEFT MY HOMELAND PENNILESS--



— BUT I HAD A BIT OF LUCK WITH A WIZARD RECENTLY—AND EARLIER TONIGHT, I---

TELL ME, IS SHADIZAR ALWAYS SO NOISY?

THIS? TONIGHT, OUR CITY IS LIKE ONE DEAD.

WHAT HAVE YOU IN THE POUCH?

OH, THAT'S JUST A FEW SWEET- MEATS, AND--

LOOK OUT!

I'LL PUT UP WITH THIS NO LONGER, KUSHITE.

IF YOU AND YOUR FRIEND MUST HAVE YOUR WRESTLING MATCH-- TAKE IT OUTSIDE!

DON'T CALL ME A KUSHITE!

I'M NO KUSHITE DOG-- NO SAVAGE EATER OF CARRION--

-- BUT A FULL- BLOODED PRINCE OF ZEMBABWEI.

AYE? WELL, COME ONE STEP CLOSER--

-- AND I'LL CROWN YOU PRINCE OF HELL!





EASY, MY FRIEND. WHY DO YOU NOT SHEATHE YOUR WEAPON?

MY TEMPER FLARES LIKE THE MANE OF A LION.

WE WANT NO TROUBLE, DO WE, NUBION?

PERHAPS WE SHOULD TAKE OUR SPORTING ELSEWHERE.

I... HAVE ALL YOUR SWEET-MEATS, CONAN.



THEN LET THESE TWO STAY HERE AND FINISH CRACKING EACH OTHER'S BONES.

WE'LL GO WHERE A MAN AND A MAID MAY TALK IN PEACE.



CROM'S DEVILS! I'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND THIS THING CALLED CIVILIZATION.

IN MY HOMELAND, EACH WARRIOR SITS IN SILENCE... AND SIPs HIS BREW ALONE.

SMALL WONDER, THEN, THAT YOU LEFT.

WHY DID YOU LIE TO ME ABOUT WHAT WAS IN THAT POUCH?



THERE WERE SOLDIERS ABOUT...PERHAPS EVEN MEMBERS OF THE PALACE GUARD.

THEY MADE ME NERVOUS.

I SEE. THEY MIGHT ASK HOW A BARBARIAN CAME BY SO MUCH GOLD--



-- ESPECIALLY WHEN AN OLD GOLDSMITH WAS ROBBED AND MURDERED EARLIER TONIGHT.

OH-- COULD WE GO IN HERE FOR A MOMENT, CONAN?



JENNA, MY SYLPH-LIKE STAR-- YOU BRIGHTEN AN OLD MAN'S SKY.

AND YOU ARE A SHAMELESS FLATTERER.

COME, CONAN-- I WANT YOU TO MEET MALDIZ--

--THE FINEST BLACKSMITH. IN SHADIZAR, EVEN IF HE IS MY UNCLE.



YOU, UH, MAKE ME **BLUSH**, MY DEAREST NIECE.

BUT, WHO'S THIS YOUNG BLADE WITH YOU?

HIS NAME IS **CONAN**, UNCLE.

HE HAS **GOLD** YOU MUST **MELT DOWN**--AND RECAST IN THE SHAPE OF A **HEART**.

WHAT?

HMMM--- SHE'S CAUGHT YOU AS OFF-GUARD AS ME, EH, LAD?

BUT SHE'S **RIGHT**, YOU KNOW-- AT LEAST IF THE GOLD CAME FROM WHERE I SUSPECT.

PLEASE, **CONAN**---

YES... ALL RIGHT, JENNA...

THEN JUST SET ASIDE FIVE GOLD COINS FOR OLD **MALDIZ**, YOUTH.

THIS WON'T TAKE LONG.

TOO LONG, FOR YOUNG EYES WHICH BURN INTO EACH OTHER--BUT FINALLY--

HERE YOU GO, MY FRIEND.

NOT QUITE UP TO A **FALCON** I ONCE FORGED! STILL---

WAIT. LET ME COOL IT OFF FOR YOU.

I SUPPOSE-- IT'S **BEAUTIFUL**, BUT---

YES-- **BEAUTIFUL**--!

THEN GO IN **PEACE**, CHILDREN.

JENNA, YOU COME SEE ME AGAIN SOON, EH?

OF COURSE, DEAR UNCLE. FAREWELL.

**THE DARK OF THE MOON:** A TIME FOR YOUNG LOVERS, IN THE SHADOWED GROVES NEAR SHADIZAR---

WAS THERE TRULY NEED TO RECAST **ALL** MY GOLD, GIRL?

IT **DOES** MAKE IT HARDER TO SPEND.

BUT EASIER TO CARRY, DON'T YOU THINK?



TO CARRY?  
YES, BUT I  
HARDLY NEED--

THEN, YOU  
REALLY OUGHT  
TO *THANK*  
ME-- OUGHTN'T  
YOU--?

YES--  
I GUESS  
I *SHOULD!*

HUH? WHY  
DID YOU PUSH  
ME AWAY?  
I THOUGHT--

AND I THOUGHT  
YOU KNEW HOW  
TO *TREAT* A  
WOMAN.

I AM A  
GIRL--NOT SOME  
BEAR THAT YOU  
ARE WRESTLING.

BESIDES, THOSE  
HORN'S ON  
YOUR HELMET  
BRUISED MY  
FOREHEAD.

THERE,  
THAT'S  
BETTER.

IT MAKES  
YOU LOOK  
LIKE A YAK,  
ANYWAY.

NOW  
GENTLY...  
GENTLY...

AS GENTLY, PERHAPS, AS  
THE TREAD OF MUFFLED  
SOLES ON NIGHT-COOL  
SANDS...?





THAT'S NOT TOO BAD. NOW, IF ONLY--

WHAT'S WRONG, GIRL? WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING--

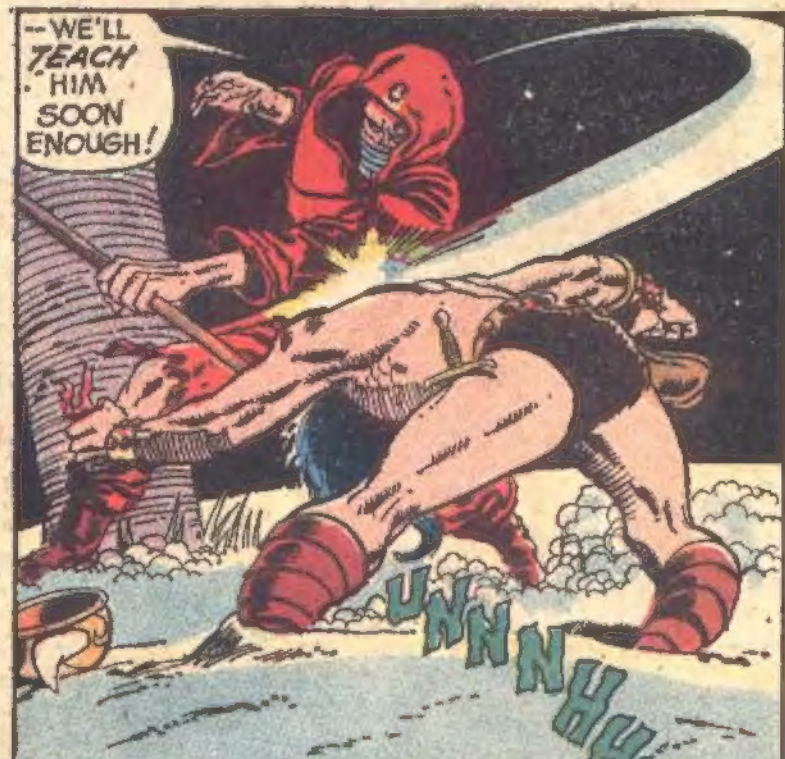
OHHH--!



HAH! THIS ONE IS A HELLCAT-- BUT WE CAN TAME HER.

STRIKE THE BARBARIAN AGAIN. HE KNOWS NOT HOW TO FALL.

NO! THEN, BY THE NIGHT-GOD WE ALL DO SERVE--



--WE'LL TEACH HIM SOON ENOUGH!

DARKNESS SWALLOWS DARKNESS--  
BLACK ENGULFS BLACK--  
THE NIGHT BECOMES A SEA TO DROWN IN--



BUT A CIMMERIAN'S HARD-BONED SKULL IS A WONDER UNTO ITSELF-- AND THUS, ERE LONG--



THE RED-ROBED ONES LEFT THE GOLDEN HEART IN ITS POUCH--

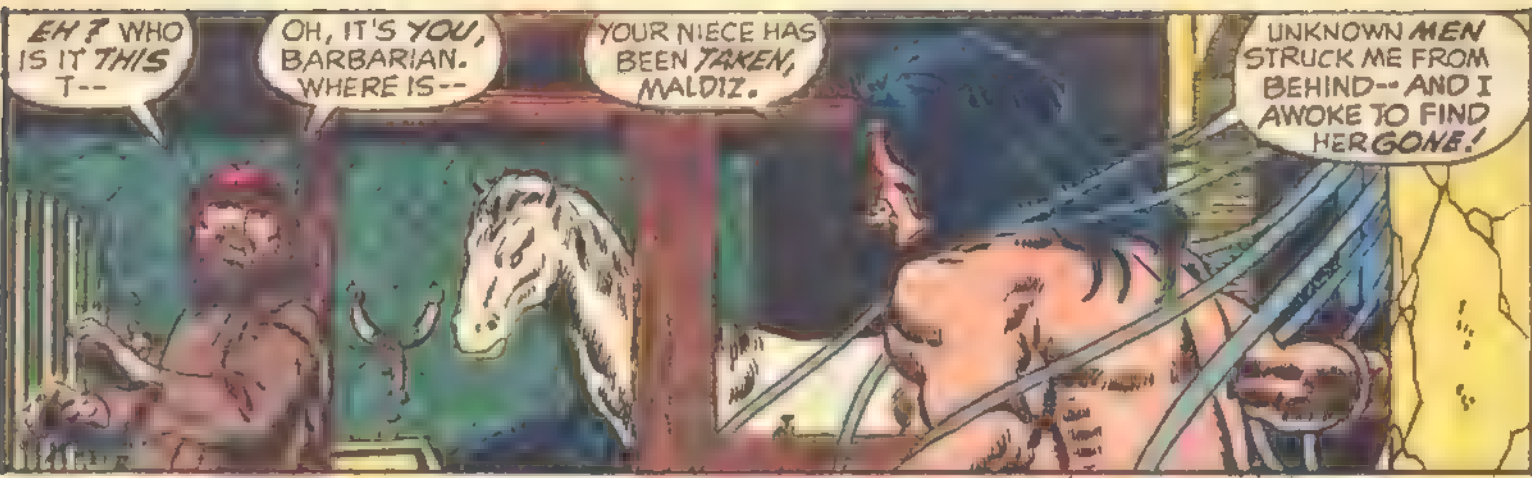
--AND TOOK, INSTEAD, THE GIRL.

I SWEAR BY CROM--



--STRANGE ARE THE WAYS OF SHADIZAR!





EH? WHO IS IT THIS T--

OH, IT'S YOU, BARBARIAN. WHERE IS--

YOUR NIECE HAS BEEN TAKEN, MALDIZ.

UNKNOWN MEN STRUCK ME FROM BEHIND-- AND I AWOKE TO FIND HER GONE!



THEN WE TWO SHALL FIND HER, CONAN--OR MITRA IS NOT. IN HIS HEAVEN!

QUICKLY-- DID YOU SEE YOUR ATTACKERS?



THEY WILL BE EASY TO FIND--IF THEY STILL WEAR THE RED ROBES THIS CAME FROM.

THEY SERVE SOMETHING CALLED--THE NIGHT-GOD.

RED ROBES? NIGHT-GOD?



FORGET HER, LAD.

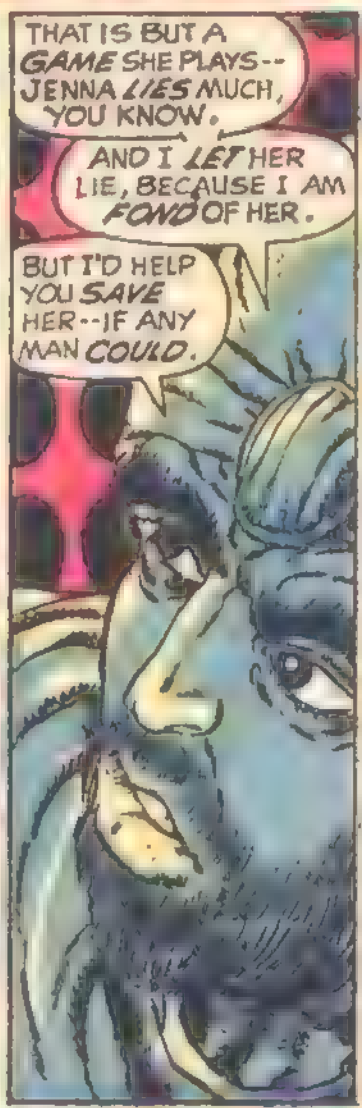
SHE IS--AS GOOD AS DEAD.



I DON'T KNOW-- WHAT YOU MEAN-- BUT HOW CAN YOU SAY TO FORGET HER, MAN?

YOUR OWN NIECE--

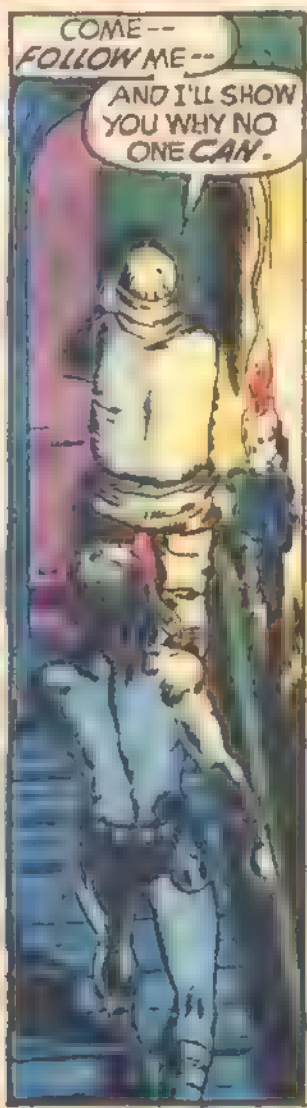
I HAVE NO NIECE, STRIPLING!



THAT IS BUT A GAME SHE PLAYS-- JENNA LIES MUCH, YOU KNOW.

AND I LET HER LIE, BECAUSE I AM FOND OF HER.

BUT I'D HELP YOU SAVE HER--IF ANY MAN COULD.



COME-- FOLLOW ME--

AND I'LL SHOW YOU WHY NO ONE CAN.



ONCE EACH MONTH, IN THE DARK OF THE MOON, A YOUNG GIRL VANISHES FROM OUR STREETS.

WE KNOW THAT THE DEVOTEES OF THE NAMELESS NIGHT-GOD TAKE HER THERE--TO THAT MINARET.

A SMALL PRICE TO PAY-- FOR PEACE WITH A DARK AND SINISTER GOD!

BUT-- WHY IS THE DOME OPEN?

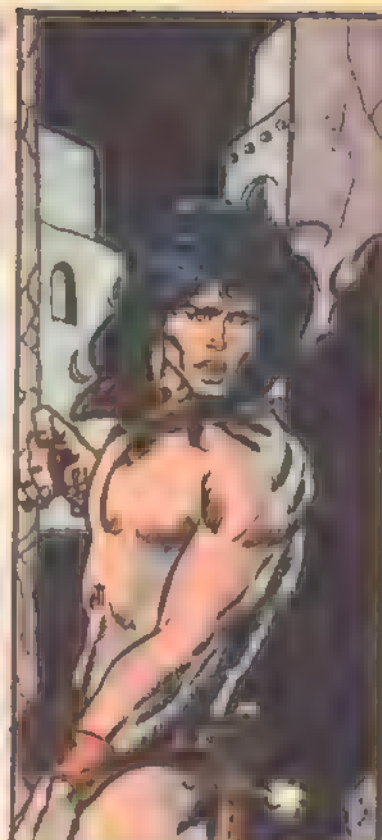
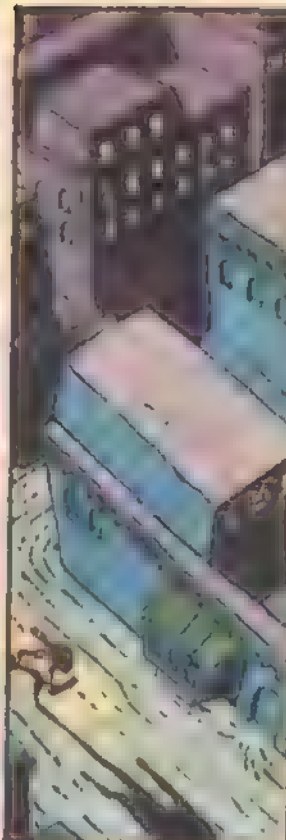


ONLY THE WORSHIPPERS  
OF THE NIGHT-GOD  
KNOW THAT, LAD.

AND THEY'RE  
NOT LIKELY TO  
SAY, ARE  
THEY?

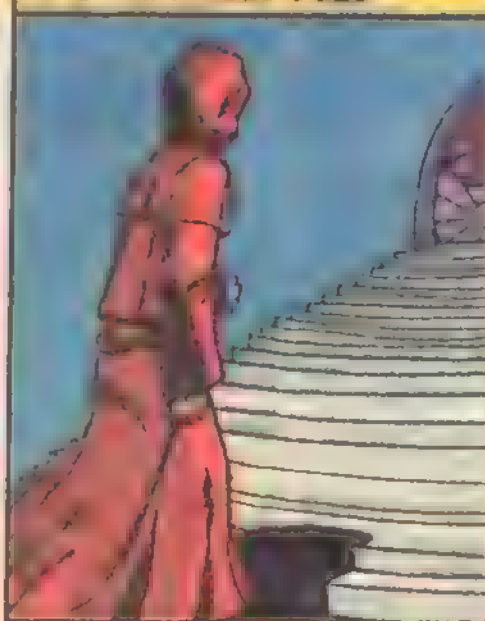
SO NOW YOU SEE  
WHY YOU MUST  
FORGET POOR  
JENNA, DON'T  
YOU, CONAN?

CONAN??



OPEN TO THE PIT-BLACK SKY IT  
YAWNS, LIKE THE GAPIING MAW OF  
SOME GREAT CARNIVORE-- ITS  
CRIMSON-COWLED PUPS ALL  
SAFE WITHIN--

-- BUT FOR ONE GRIM VOTARY,  
WHO HAS LINGERED O'ERLONG  
AT SOME UNTOLD DEED--



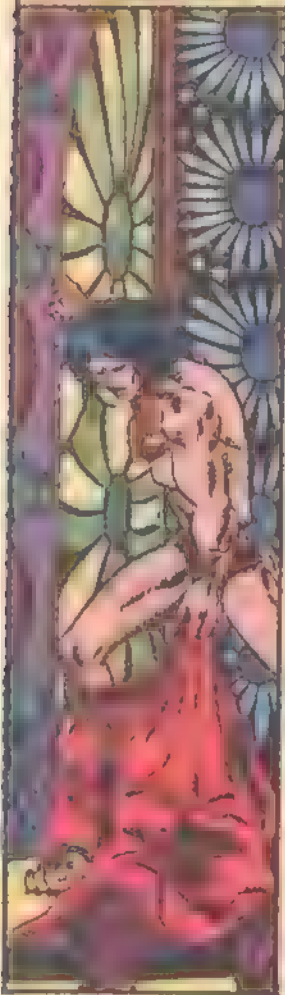
--AND  
NOW--

--MUST PAY THE PRICE!

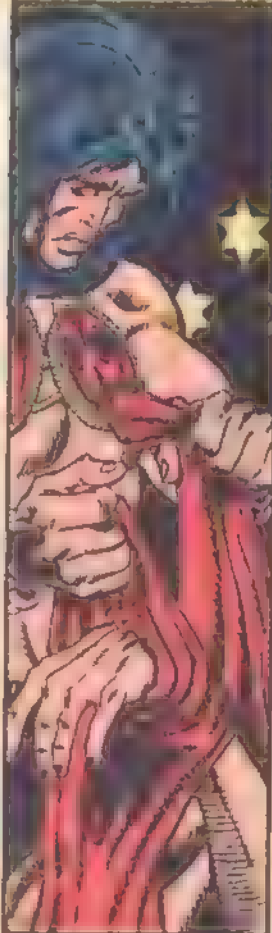




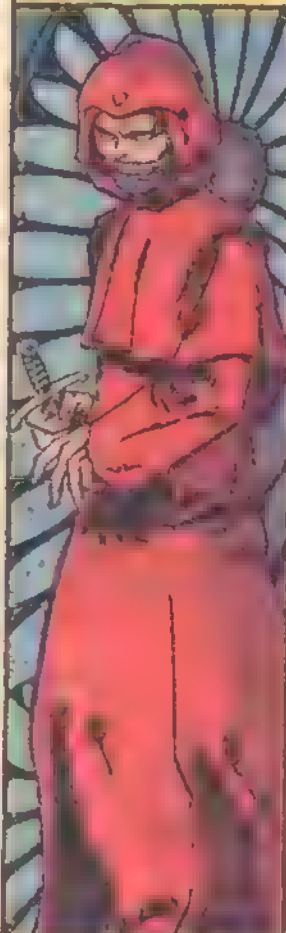
EVEN NOW, CONAN  
COULD HARDLY  
EXPLAIN WHY HE  
HAS COME HERE--



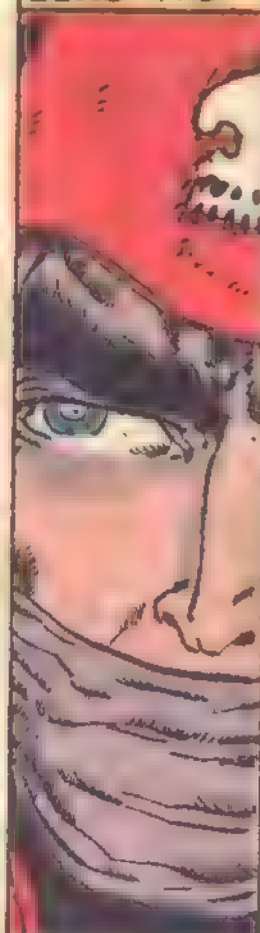
--HERE, TO THE  
VERY DEN OF THE  
MOST FEARED  
SECT IN ALL OF  
SIN-WRACKED  
SHADIZAR--



--TO TRY TO SAVE  
THE LIFE OF A  
WENCH HE HARDLY  
KNOWS-- OR  
PERISH IN THE  
TRYING.



BUT HER YOUNG  
LIPS WERE  
WARM-- HER  
LAUGHTER LIKE  
SMALL SILVER  
BELLS-- AND--



BELLS! THE CIMMERIAN  
HEARS THEIR WOMEN-  
TARY ECHO, FROM  
SOMEWHERE IN THE  
SPRAWLING TEMPLE--



BUT WHERE?  
WHERE??



YOU ARE  
LATE, FELLOW.

HAVE YOU  
NO EARS? THE  
CEREMONY IS  
ABOUT TO--

HOLD!



YOU ARE NO  
TRUE ACOLYTE  
OF THE  
NIGHT-GOD.

ONLY  
THOSE  
WITH EYES  
WHERE MID-  
NIGHT DWELLS  
MAY SERVE  
HIM.

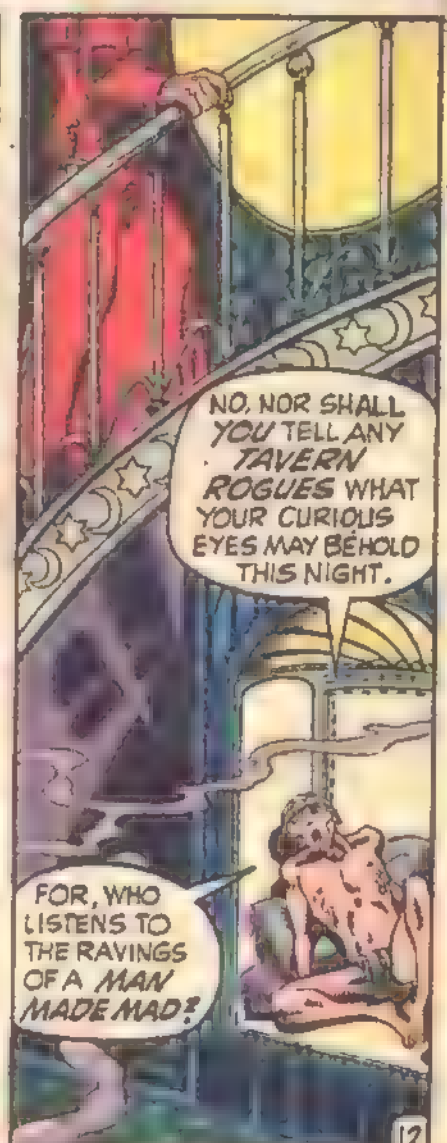
YET--TOUCH  
NOT YOUR  
SWORD-HILT.

I'LL  
TELL NO  
ONE.

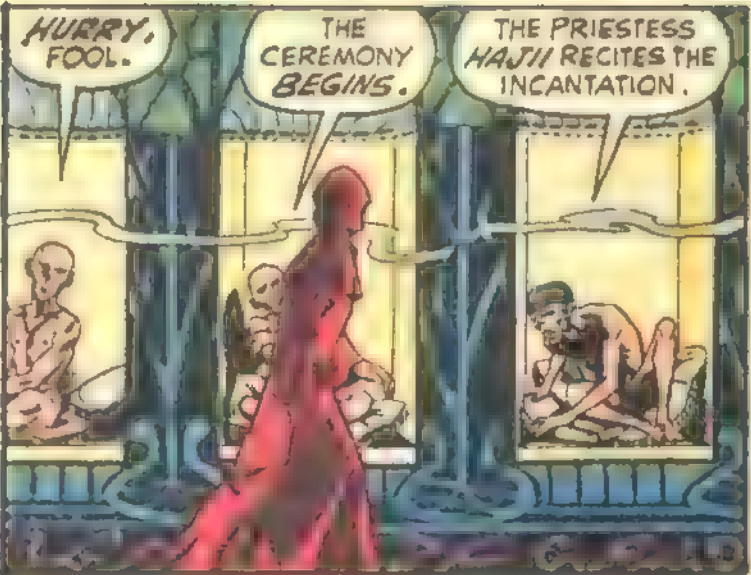


NO, NOR SHALL  
YOU TELL ANY  
TAVERN  
ROGUES WHAT  
YOUR CURIOUS  
EYES MAY BEHOLD  
THIS NIGHT.

FOR, WHO  
LISTENS TO  
THE RAVINGS  
OF A MAN  
MADE MAD?



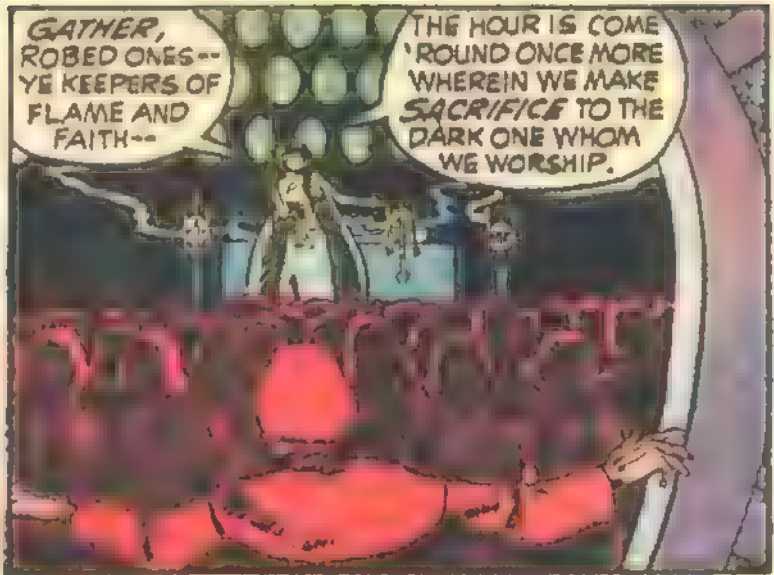




HURRY, FOOL.

THE CEREMONY BEGINS.

THE PRIESTESS HAJJI RECITES THE INCANTATION.



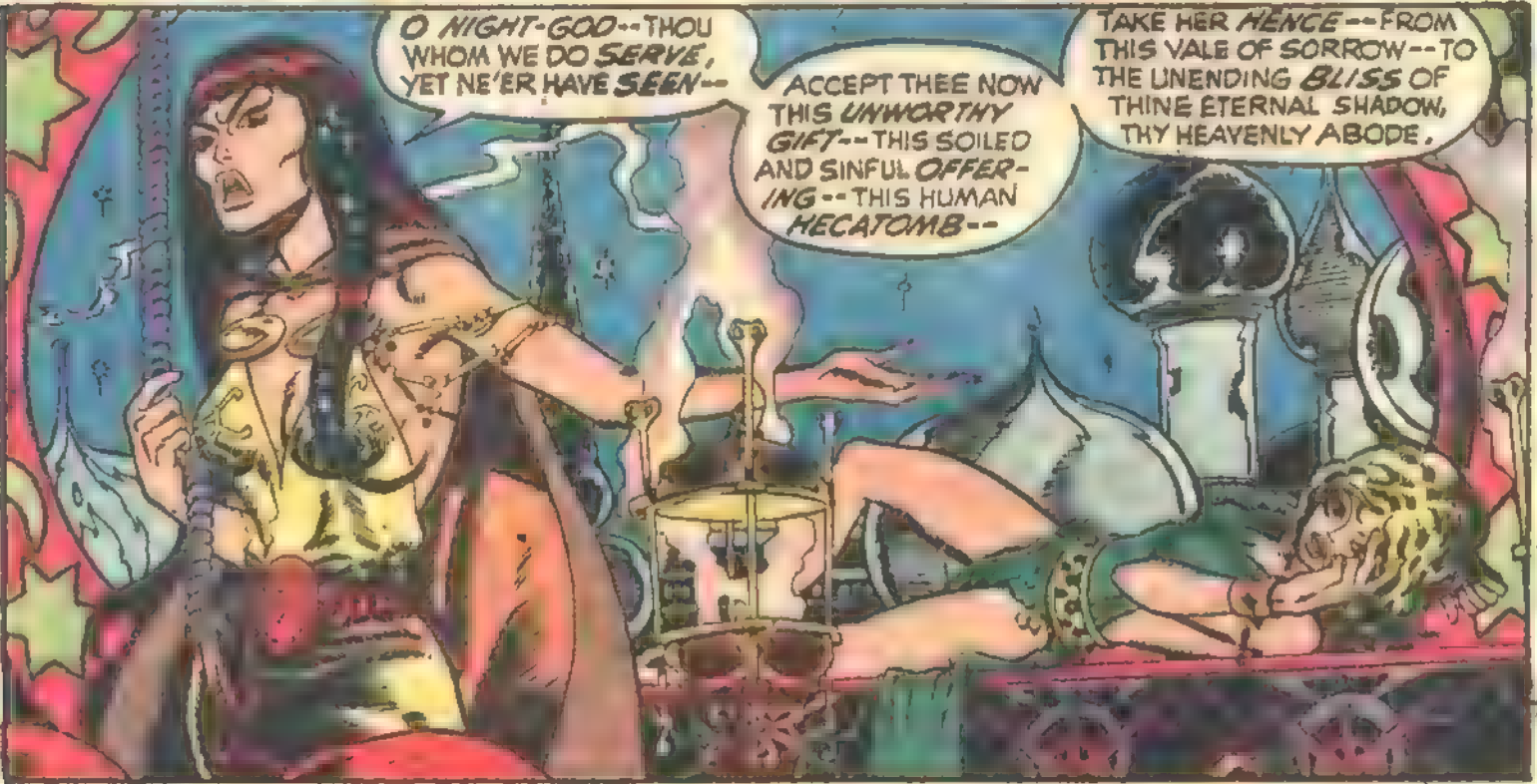
GATHER, ROBED ONES-- YE KEEPERS OF FLAME AND FAITH--

THE HOUR IS COME 'ROUND ONCE MORE WHEREIN WE MAKE SACRIFICE TO THE DARK ONE WHOM WE WORSHIP.



AND CONAN SEES THAT THE SACRIFICE IS-- JENNA!

BUT HIS LIPS MUST KEEP BENUMBED SILENCE.



O NIGHT-GOD--THOU WHOM WE DO SERVE, YET NE'ER HAVE SEEN--

ACCEPT THEE NOW THIS UNWORTHY GIFT-- THIS SOILED AND SINFUL OFFERING-- THIS HUMAN HECATOMB--

TAKE HER HENCE-- FROM THIS VALE OF SORROW-- TO THE UNENDING BLISS OF THINE ETERNAL SHADOW, THY HEAVENLY ABODE.



COME! COME NOW!

JENNA IS PAST CRYING-- PAST WHIMPERING FOR MERCY. YET, AS SHRILL AND PIERCING TONES REVERBERATE THROUGHOUT THE STRANGELY-SHAPED DOME--



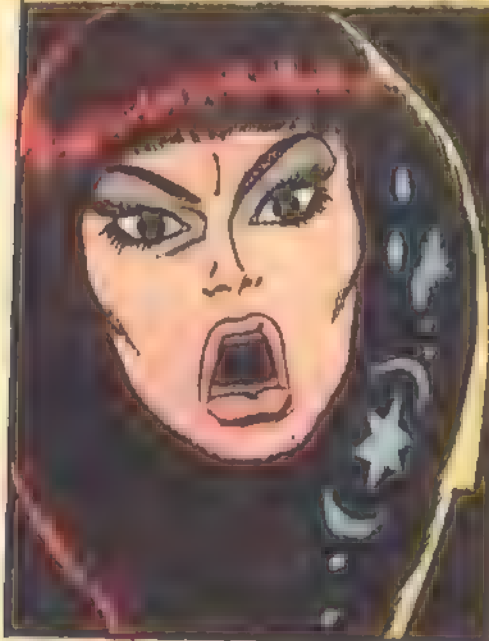
--JENNA SCREAMS!

THE VOTARIES OF THE UNKNOWN NIGHT-GOD, HOWEVER, SEEM EERILY UNAFFECTED-- ALL SAVE ONE--





THEN, ABOVE THE DIN, THE VOICE OF HAJII IS HEARD:  
"THE NIGHT-GOD COMETH!"



A SLENDER HAND CAPS THE SOLE  
LIGHTED BRAZIER-- AND THE  
CHAMBER IS PLUNGED INTO  
ASTRAL BLACKNESS.



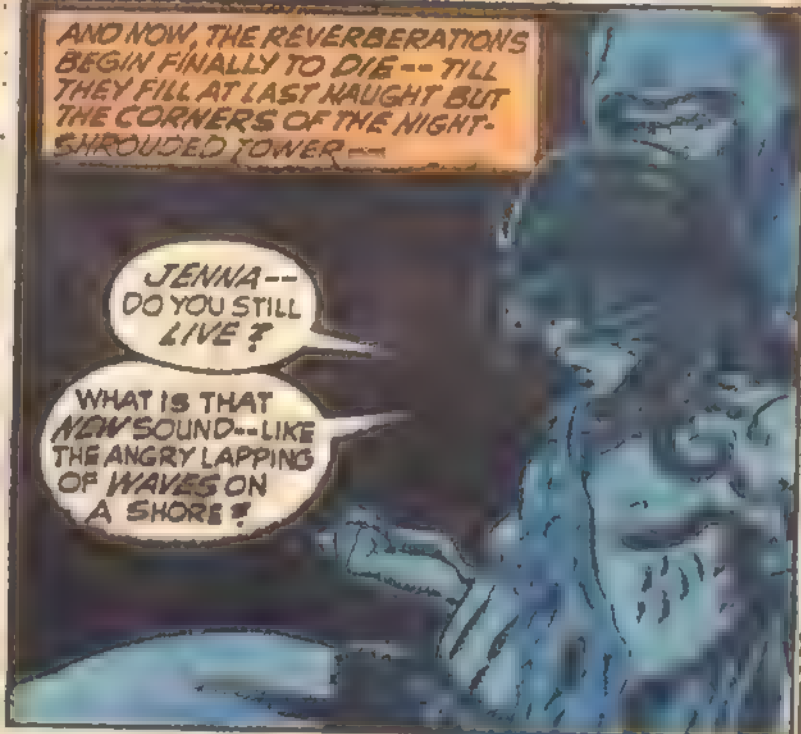
BUT STILL THE STRIDENT ECHES  
OF THE BELL SEEM TO GROW  
LOUDER, EVER LOUDER--TILL  
CONAN CAN STAND IT NO  
LONGER.



EVEN IN THE DARKNESS, STRONG HANDS--  
STRONG BECAUSE THEY ARE FANATICS--  
HANDS--GRASP THE BARBARIAN'S ARMS,  
RENT HIS VESTMENT, SEIZE HIS DAGGER--



AND NOW, THE REVERBERATIONS  
BEGIN FINALLY TO DIE-- TILL  
THEY FILL AT LAST NAUGHT BUT  
THE CORNERS OF THE NIGHT-  
SHROUDED TOWER--



JENNA--  
DO YOU STILL  
LIVE?

WHAT IS THAT  
NEW SOUND--LIKE  
THE ANGRY LAPPING  
OF WAVES ON  
A SHORE?

WINGS, CONAN!  
SOMETHING HOVERS  
ABOVE ME--  
FLAPPING ITS  
HELLISH WINGS.



NOW-- IT  
DESCENDS--  
ITS CLAMMY  
FLESH TOUCHES  
MINE--IT--



CONAN!





PERHAPS THE  
HANDS OF WILD-  
EYED ZEALOTS  
CAN HOLD  
HELPLESS A  
BEWILDERED  
CINMERIAN--

BUT THEY GIVE LIKE STRAWS BEFORE THE FURY OF A MADDENED  
WHIRLWIND FROM OUT OF THE FIERCE-BLOWING NORTH!

JENNA!

BLAST THIS  
DARKNESS!  
I CAN SEE  
NOTHING!

SUDDENLY, A  
HIGH-PITCHED  
SCREECH  
SPLITS THE  
NIGHT--SOME-  
THING HUGE  
FANS THE  
STILL AIR--

NOW A  
MIGHTY  
BARBARIAN  
FIST  
LASHES OUT--

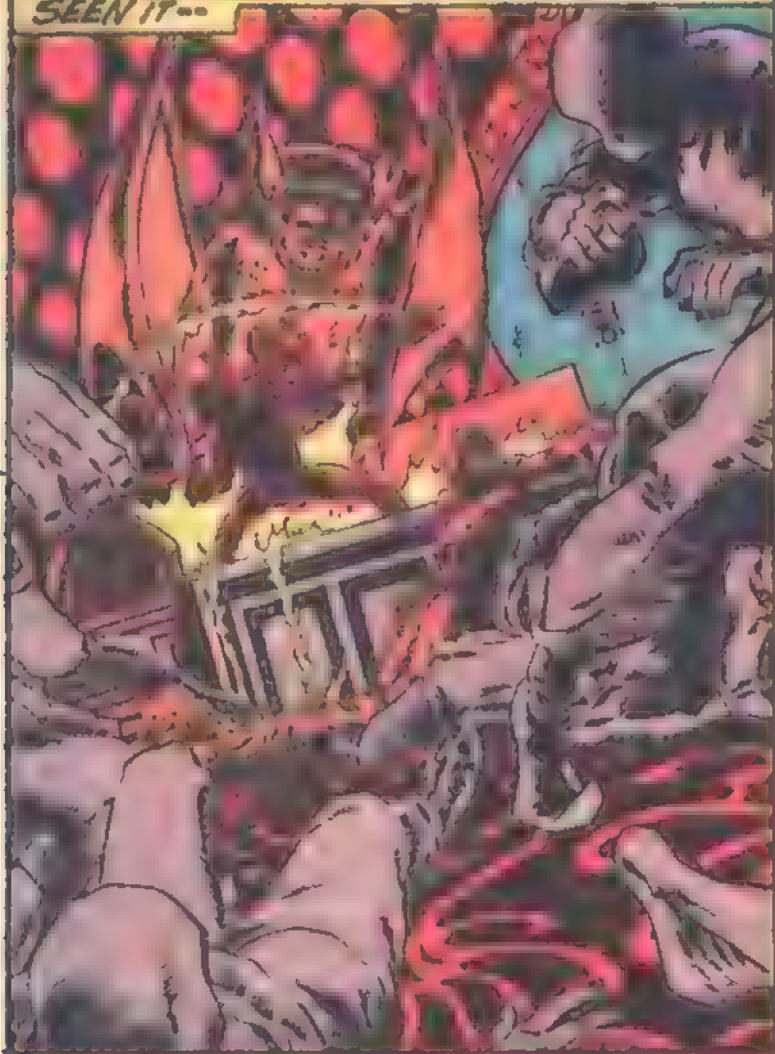
--SMASHING THE LOOSE-CAPPED  
BRAZIER--SPILLING OUT FIRE  
AND OIL--

--AND LIGHT--LIGHT  
THAT REVEALS A SCENE  
TO BLAST A MAN'S  
ETERNAL SOUL!

CROW!



OUT FROM SUNLESS CAVERNS HAS IT FLOWN,  
THIS TIME-FORGOTTEN NIGHT-GOD--TO PAR-  
TAKE OF A MONTHLY FOOD-OFFERING MADE IT BY  
PLINY CREATURES WHO NE'ER BEFORE HAVE  
SEEN IT--



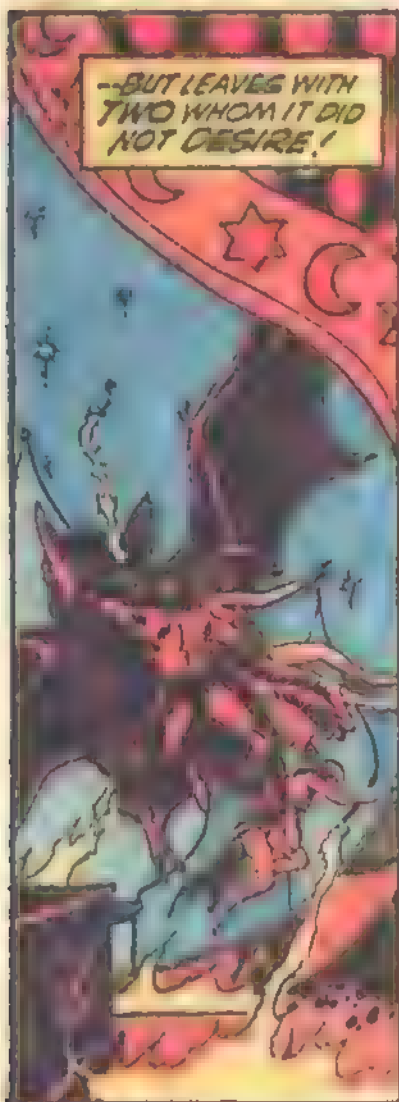
--AND WHO, HAVING  
SEEN IT, WILL SCARCELY  
GIVE IT REASON TO COME  
E'ER AGAIN.!



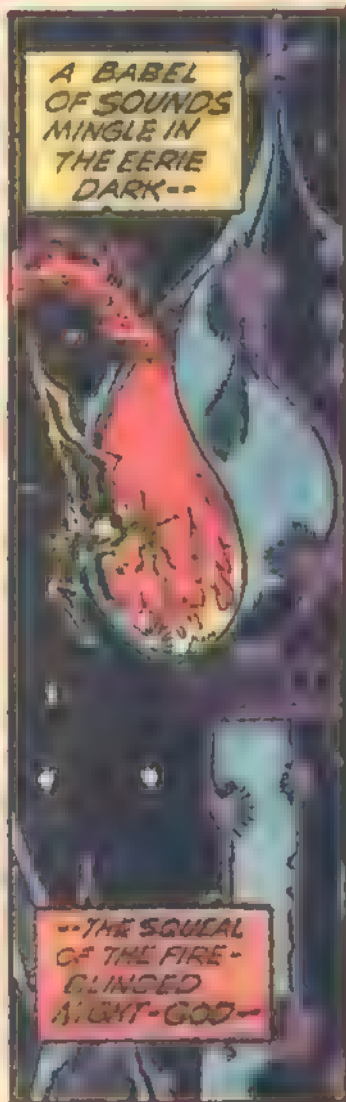
CONFUSED--BLIND-  
ED BY A FEARFULLY-  
WAVED BRAZIER--  
THE CYCLOPEAN  
BEAST TURNS TOWARD  
THE OPEN PORTAL--



--BUT LEAVES WITH  
TWO WHOM IT DID  
NOT DESIRE.!

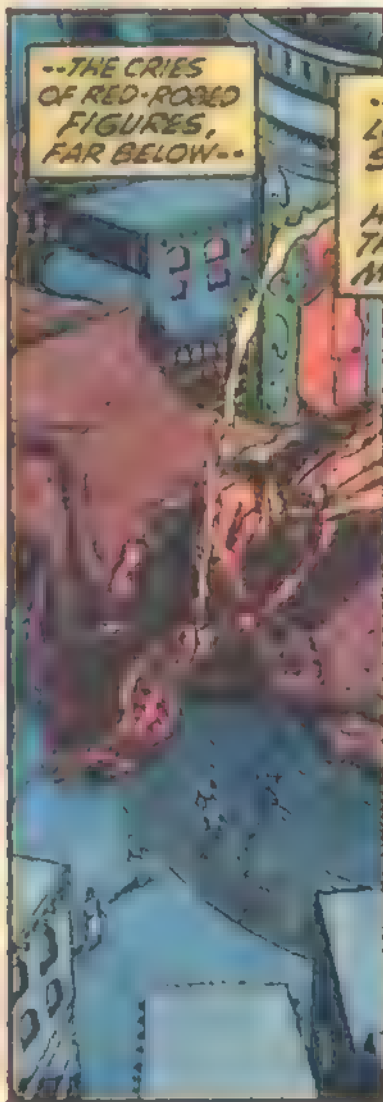


A BABEL  
OF SOUNDS  
MINGLE IN  
THE EERIE  
DARK--

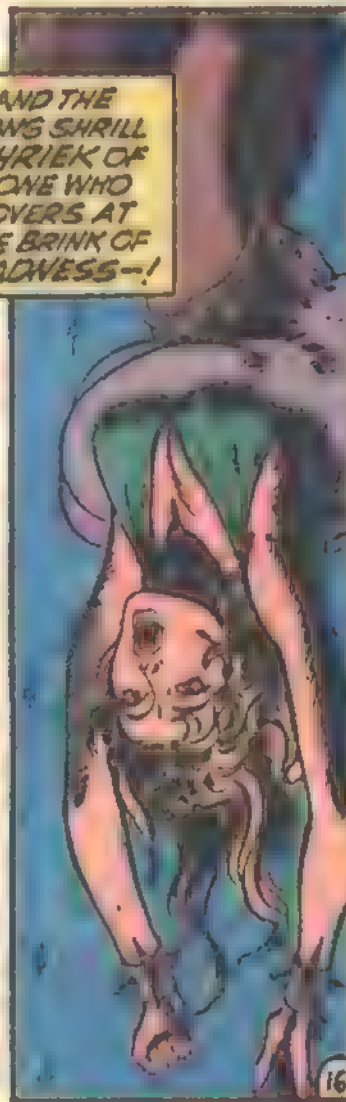


--THE SQUEAL  
OF THE FIRE-  
BLINDED  
NIGHT-GOD--

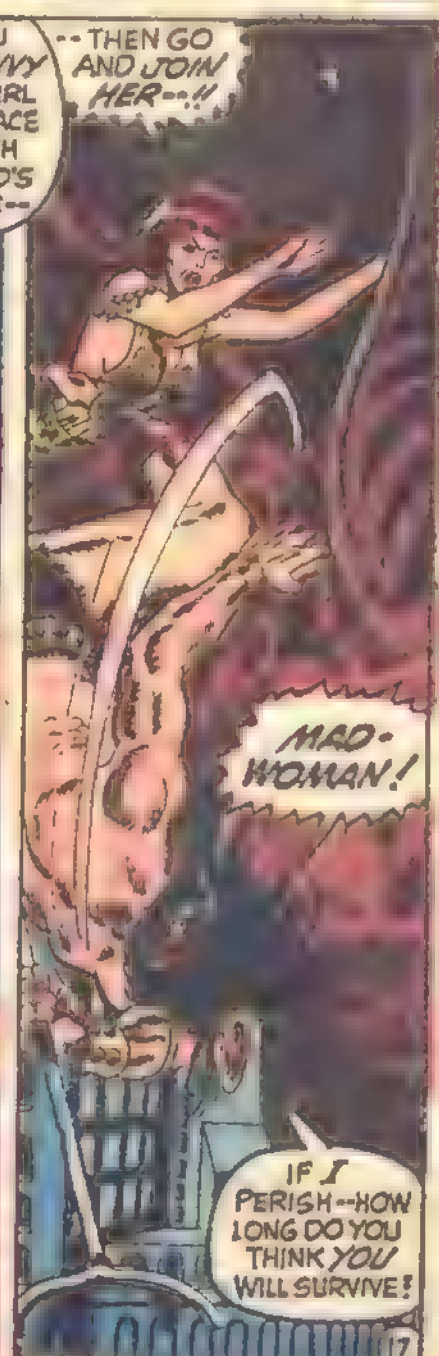
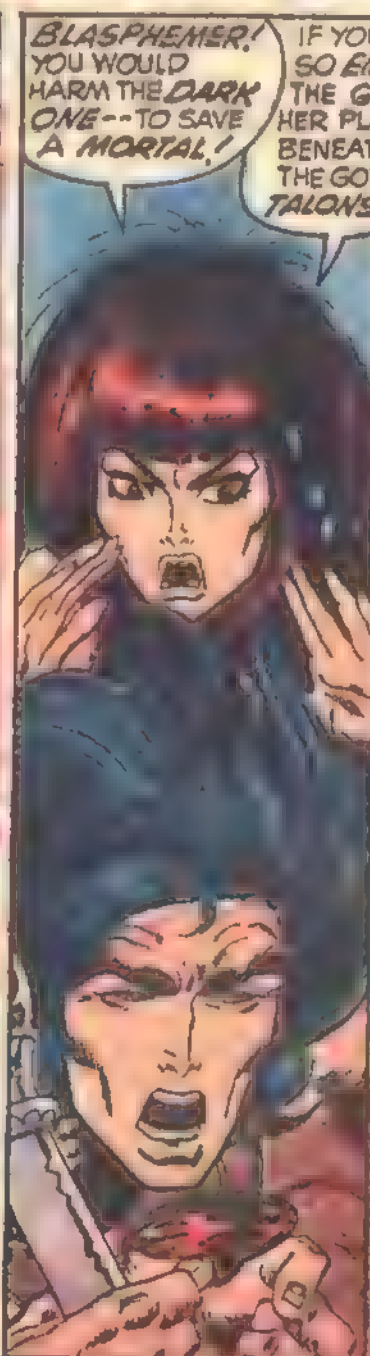
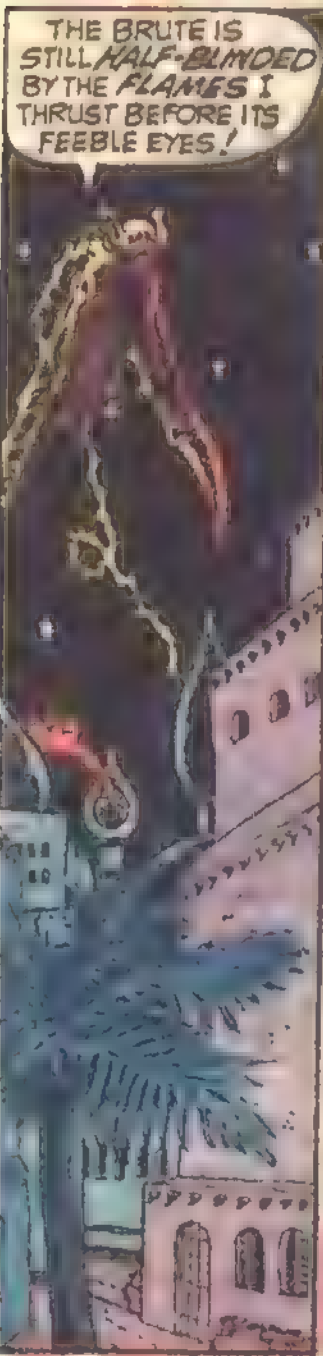
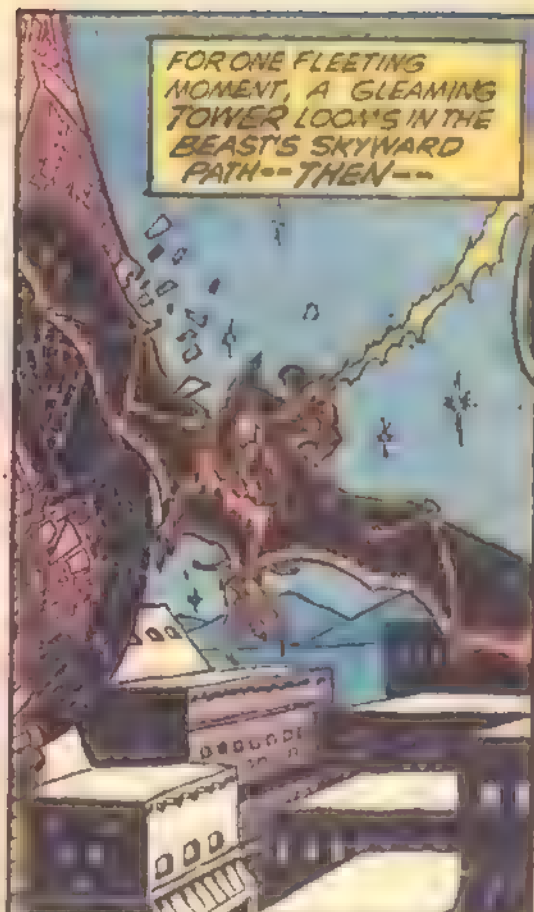
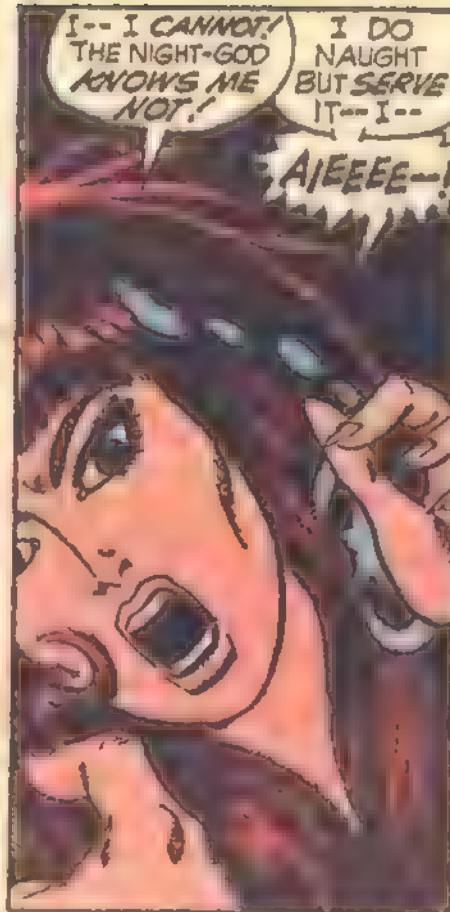
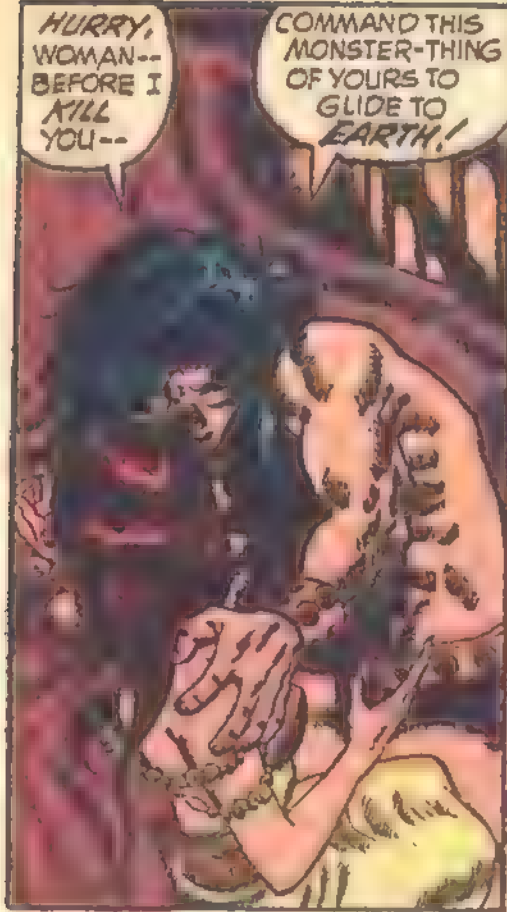
--THE CRIES  
OF RED-ROBED  
FIGURES,  
FAR BELOW--



--AND THE  
LONG SHRILL  
SHRIEK OF  
ONE WHO  
HOVERS AT  
THE BRINK OF  
MADNESS--!















NAMELESS  
DOG! WHY  
COULD YOU NOT  
HAVE PERISHED  
IN YOUR OWN  
FAR-OFF, DISMAL  
CLIME?

WHY DID  
YOU HAVE TO  
COME TO  
SHADIZAR  
TO--



WHAT? STILL ALIVE?

NOT FOR  
LONG,  
BARBARIAN!  
NOT FOR--



OOHHH



SHE IS  
DEAD,  
CONAN.

GONE TO GREET  
HER NIGHT-GOD,  
NO DOUBT-- IN THAT  
SAME "ETERNAL  
SHADOW"  
WHERE SHE WISHED  
TO SEND ME.

ARE YOU  
WELL, MY  
CHAMPION?

JENNA--!?



I AM NOT QUITE  
AS FRAIL AS YOU  
MIGHT SUSPECT,  
DEAR CONAN.

ONE CANNOT  
BE, AND STILL  
SURVIVE THE  
DARK DENS OF  
SHADIZAR.



BUT-- DO NOT  
SPEAK NOW. I  
SEE YOU ARE  
NOT BADLY  
HURT.

CLOSE YOUR  
EYES-- AND  
DREAM  
GOLDEN  
DREAMS:

DO YOU  
HEAR ME,  
MY LOVE?



I SAID  
SLEEP--  
SLEEP--  
SLEEP--



THE SUN AWAKENS HOT AND SULLEN ON THE DESERT PLAIN THAT GIROLES THE CITY CALLED SHADIZAR...

JENNA--?

GONE--  
WHILE I  
SLEPT!

SHE SAVED MY  
LIFE-- THEN LEFT  
ME THUS.

BUT-- SHE DID NOT  
GO EMPTY-HANDED.

A HEART OF  
GOLD-- EASIER  
TO CARRY,  
SHE SAID.

"DREAM  
GOLDEN  
DREAMS," SHE  
WHISPERED.

BUT I  
GOT THE  
DREAMS...

...AND  
SHE, THE  
GOLD.

SO FARE THEE  
WELL, ANCIENT  
CITY.

AT LAST  
I KNOW WHY  
THEY NAMED THEE  
SHADIZAR THE  
WICKED.

I SHALL PASS  
AGAIN THRU  
YOUR GREAT  
BEJEWELLED  
GATES...

...WHEN NEXT I HAVE  
GOLD THAT CAN SPARE  
THE LOSING.

THE DESERT SUN BURNS AWAY MEMORIES, SO THEY SAY. AYE, BARBARIAN FAR FROM HOME-- SO THEY SAY!

FINIS



# THE HYBORIAN PAGE

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Dear Stan, Roy, Barry, Sal, and Sam,

Gentlemen, I bow my head before you. I stand ready to retract every statement I have made during the past two years concerning a decrease in the quality of your product. You have just reconfirmed my faith in Marvel for the next twelve centuries, as you always do whenever I feel you begin to lag.

This time, the miracle-worker was CONAN THE BARBARIAN #3: Issue #1 was unbelievable, especially on Roy's part; his rugged, powerful script carried with it the very essence of the Hyborian Age as Howard envisioned it. Issue #2, however, showed signs of degeneration. Substitute Daredevil, Captain America, or the Panther for Conan—it would still make a reasonable, logical story. In other words, Conan had begun to degenerate from a sword-and-sorcery type hero into a super-hero à la Cap, DD, Panther, or Ka-Zar. Naturally, I viewed this as another indication of a downward trend which I thought I saw manifested in your other magazines. Before writing, I decided to wait for issue #3 to see if you were definitely beginning such a trend.

Man, am I glad I waited! #3 is the most beautiful piece of work I have ever seen in comic-book form. Roy, you and Barry must have done the first three pages in unison. The beauty of the horsewomen and their horses, the grey god standing against the sky, open and infinite, glittering with stars against the blackness, combined with the awesome, warlike, mystic dialogue to produce a scene equalling and surpassing the Siege of Gondor in the *Lord of the Rings*, formerly my favorite scene in all literature, in its wonderment and sense of expectation. I can say the same for the last two pages, which featured the return of Borri and the Choosers of the Slain. The grey rain against the black sky was a masterstroke of coloring for whoever did it.

And Sam, you did your part too. It has become a habit of yours to place dark borders around balloons to indicate powerful, deep voices. On pages 2 and 3, the dark borders made Borri sound omnipotent, all-powerful and all-knowing, like Gandalf on the bridge of Khazad-Dum.

There was a lot more that was good about the book: i.e., the female characters were better written, Conan was not an invincible superhero, etc., but I think the first three pages and the last two were alone worth many times the price of the book. The cover, sad to say, was inappropriate and misleading; it did not carry the essence of the story, but instead showed Conan battling Borri and trying to rescue a woman, which he never did.

So may the Ring of Power never lead you into evil, and I name you Elf-friends and blessed—

Jeffrey W. Taylor, 9115 Kirkdale Rd.  
Bethesda, Md. 20034

And may the Dark Gods of Chaos never picket thy PTA meetings, Jeff. Incidentally, though we're all fans of Slammin' Sammy Rosen (who has lettered all CONANs to date up to this one), it's Stan or Roy or Gerry Conway—whichever of our awesome authors writes a particular story—who indicates to the letterer the shape and style of the word-balloons. (They figure that Sam and Artie have enough to do just trying to wade thru their typos!)

Dear Stan, Roy, and Barry,

Roy Thomas has captured Howard's flavor, and Barry Smith's artwork improves issue by issue! (Still, I'd like to see John Buscema handle an issue of the Cimmerian, just for fun.)

When I read "Twilight of the Grim Grey God" in the third

issue, the splash page said that it had been adapted from REH's story "The Grey God Passes"; so I carefully looked through my paperback collection of Conan—and could not find that title. I'm not saying that I'm a Howard expert, but please explain!

Jack Adams, 1650 Ryan St.  
Victoria, B.C., Canada

Gladly, friend. One of the unpublished Howard stories left at the time of his death was "The Grey God Passes", which dealt with the adventures of a Conan-like warrior-slave named Conn. Since, as deCamp has pointed out, REH's heroes are mostly cut from out of the same cloth, it was a simple matter to turn Conn into Conan—the god Odin (in the original story) into Borri (which should actually have been spelled "Bori")—and the battle of Clontarf (between heathens and Christians) into a Hyperborean-Brythunian free-for-all. Most readers seemed to feel it all turned out well enough—especially the pages at the beginning and end of the story, which followed Howard most closely.

Incidentally, for those of you who are Howard completists, we might as well mention that "The Grey God Passes" is currently available only in a hardback (\$5) edition from Arkham House Publishers, Sauk City, Wisconsin, in a volume titled *Dark Mind, Dark Heart*, which features stories by H.P. Lovecraft and others as well. And like we said before—tell 'em Marvel sent you!

Dear Stan, Roy, and Barry,

Here's just one more letter thanking you for CONAN THE BARBARIAN. Howard's creation is very close to what I had been looking for in comics, but I "hope without hope in my heart" for I fear CONAN will follow THE SILVER SURFER into undeserved oblivion.

Peter Haytman, 1315 Flag Ave. So.  
St. Louis Park, Minn. 55426

Maybe so, Pete, but it hardly seems likely—since the first issue did well enough for the powers-that-be at Marvel to declare it a monthly mag! And at this point, Stan, Roy, and Barry would like to thank each and every one of the thousands of readers who took the time and trouble to tell us what he thought of that first landmark issue—and of the ones since. (Yes, they're even just a wee bit thankful for those occasional letters with which they totally and unequivocally disagreed. How equalitarian can you get?)



NEXT: **THE GOD IN THE BOWL!**

## KNOW YE THESE, THE HALLOWED RANKS OF MARVELDOM:

**R.F.O.** (Real Frantic One)—A buyer of at least 3 Marvel mags a month.  
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**Q.N.S.** (Quite "Nuff Sayer)—A fortunate frantic one who's had a letter printed.

**K.O.F.** (Keeper Of the Flame)—One who recruits a newcomer to Marvel's rollickin' ranks.  
**P.M.M.** (Permanent Marvelite Maximus)—Anyone possessing all four of the other titles.  
**F.F.F.** (Fearless Front-Facer)—An honorary title bestowed for devotion to Marvel above and beyond the call of duty.